

Mosquito Surveillance to Begin

Dragon Mosquito Control, Inc. crews will begin their annual war on mosquitoes starting the week of April 18 in many parts of the state including Amherst. Arriving in clearly identified white pickup trucks wearing bright red shirts with the "Dragon Mosquito" logo and camouflage pants, crews will begin their second year of surveillance in many parts of the town to check water temperatures and look for signs of mosquito life. The goal is to prevent the spread of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile virus, the mosquito-borne diseases that causes encephalitis or brain infection.

If the susceptible water areas to be evaluated around town have a temperature of 45 degrees or higher, it could mean trouble. Mosquito eggs can start to hatch in water at that temperature. Even if the water isn't warm now, there's a danger it could have reached higher temperatures during the recent good weather, allowing some eggs to hatch. We are optimistic that crew won't detect mosquito larvae this early in the season, but abnormal weather patterns have made forecasting the mosquito season tricky.

According to Dragon Mosquito Control Inc., Integrated Pest Management (IPM) begins with a comprehensive look at a town's geographical area from the sky. We identify potential mosquito habitat using satellite photos, paper maps, tips from residents and other sources. Then we visit these sites on foot and sample mosquito larvae. Contrary to popular belief, not all wetlands support breeding mosquitoes. After a thorough assessment of each site, we treat those that are actually supporting mosquito larvae. Treating larval habitat is highly effective because it kills mosquitoes before they get a chance to grow into winged adults and pose a biting risk.

Following larvicide treatments, larvae mortality assessments are performed to ensure that our approach is producing the desired results. Residents may see blue colored carbon dioxide-baited light traps hanging from trees in select areas that are used to attract and collect adult mosquitoes at monitoring sites.

As the mosquito season progresses, the adult mosquito surveillance process begins. Surveillance is an early detection system to confirm the presence of diseases such as Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile Virus (WNV). We deploy various types of mosquito traps depending on the targeted species. Captured mosquitoes are then frozen, identified, pooled by location, packed in dry ice and sent to the State Laboratory for testing. (By the way, a mosquito pool is a grouping of trapped mosquitoes by location - not a specific pool of water.)

Positive EEE/WNV test results will trigger a reassessment of risk levels and immediate discussions with town officials. At this point, treating adult mosquitoes may begin in accordance with the scope and scale outlined by town and state public health officials.

Residents who do not want their property treated must contact Dragon Mosquito Control in writing at **PO Box 46, Stratham, NH 03885**. Please be sure to include your name, physical address, phone number, and a description of your property with boundaries. Residents who would like to have their stagnant water checked for mosquitoes can call **964-8400** or email Info@DragonMosquito.com. There is no charge for this service. Contact us for more information on spray dates, location, materials used, precautions or other concerns.